

Mexico to deploy 6,000 troops to southern border as Trump postpones tariffs

By Alex González
8 June 2019

In last minute negotiations to halt the imposition of a five percent tariff on Monday, the US and Mexican governments agreed on a deal that will virtually block all asylum seekers from Central America to the United States.

Late last night, Trump announced via Twitter that the planned tariffs are “indefinitely suspended” because Mexico “has agreed to take strong measures to stem the tide of Migration through Mexico, and to our Southern Border. This is being done to greatly reduce, or eliminate, Illegal Immigration coming from Mexico.”

Trump had threatened to impose an escalating tariff of five percent on all Mexican goods each month from June until October, when tariffs could reach up to 25 percent. Mexico had threatened retaliatory tariffs if the initial set of Trump’s tariffs went into effect on Monday.

The use of tariff threats by the Trump administration to pursue its fascistic anti-immigrant agenda represents an effort by American imperialism to dictate policy to the entire people of Latin America. The US government is demanding that Mexico break with international asylum law and militarize hundreds of towns and cities, or be punished by its largest trading partner with a likely economic recession by placing a tariff on \$350 billion worth of exports to the US. Although millions of Mexican citizens live in the US under constant terror of deportation by the American immigration Gestapo, the Mexican government has agreed to effectively deputize its security forces as ICE agents.

On Thursday, Mexican officials announced plans to deploy 6,000 Mexican National Guard troops to Mexico’s southern border. The deployment will consist of 13 units made up of between 450 and 600 troops. Ten units will be sent to the border with Guatemala, where most Central American asylum seekers cross into Mexico, and three will operate in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec region of southern Mexico. The troops are set to arrive by

September.

The Mexican president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as “AMLO”), confirmed the deployment of troops at a press briefing on Friday. AMLO stated that the National Guard will “accompany” migrants and carry out a “security policy.” For all intents and purposes, the National Guard will now be doing Trump’s dirty work south of the Rio Grande. The 60,000-member National Guard was proposed and established by AMLO and the ruling “leftist” Movement for National Regeneration (Morena) earlier this year.

When reporters asked if the announcement represented a capitulation to Trump in the trade negotiations, AMLO refused to answer the question. He cynically raised both his hands with a “love and peace” gesture and said, “I am the owner of my silence.” He proceeded, “We have no conscience issues and we want to help the United States.”

The addition of 6,000 troops to Mexico’s southern border will increase four-fold the number of military in the area. The number of troops will be roughly equal to that of American military stationed to the north at the US-Mexico border. Because the Mexican border with Guatemala is just 571 miles (871 km) long, there will be roughly 10 soldiers for every mile separating Mexico and Guatemala. Mexican officials have not stated whether the deployment of the National Guard will be permanent.

The decision to deploy 6,000 troops is the latest escalation of AMLO’s assault on immigrants in order to placate Trump and his fascist advisors on behalf of the Mexican capitalists. In May, the Mexican government deported more than 22,000 unauthorized immigrants, the highest monthly figure on record. Prior to Friday, the Mexican government had already agreed to detain 800 immigrants per day, or a whopping 24,800 asylum seekers per month. This would amount to the summary detention of 292,000 men, women, and children feeling violence and abuse each year.

But even this brutal regime of detentions and deportations was deemed insufficient by the Trump administration. According to officials cited by the *Washington Post*, the US demanded that Mexico detain so many immigrants that US Border Patrol arrests would decline from 144,000 to an average of 20,000 each month.

The rotten Trump-AMLO deal can only be implemented through a massive assault on the democratic rights of the population, immigrant and native-born alike, in the US, Mexico and across Central America. To carry out the detention of hundreds of thousands of people, the Mexican government will, by necessity, require the imposition of martial law not only at its southern border, but in wide regions of the country. Mexican police cannot carry out sweeps and checkpoints at streets, workplaces, schools and communities without the suspension or extreme curtailment of fundamental due process rights.

The militarization of the country will undoubtedly include further assassinations and human rights abuses by the armed forces, particularly against dissenting voices. On Thursday, AMLO used a press briefing to announce the detention of Irineo Mujica and Cristóbal Sánchez, two immigrants' rights activists working in Mexico. Sánchez was arrested by plain-clothes officers in his home in Mexico City and dragged to an unmarked car, while Mujica was arrested in Sonora. Both are charged on the phony pretense that they were engaged in "human trafficking."

A key demand of the Trump administration is that Mexico sign a deal declaring that it will be a "Safe Third Country." This would virtually block poor Central American men, women, or children from obtaining asylum in the US under the bogus claim that migrants will be "safe" in Mexico and therefore have no legal claim to American asylum. It is not yet clear whether this is part of the deal announced last night. Trump said in his tweet that the State Department would publicize the details of the deal in the coming days.

Given that the murder rate in Mexico is higher than in Iraq or Afghanistan and that half of the population lives in poverty, the claim that migrants will live a safe and healthy life in Mexico is preposterous. Gangs in alliance with the gangs of Central America operate with impunity throughout much of Mexico. Conditions are even worse in southern states such as Chiapas, where the Mexican government has been intercepting and arbitrarily holding immigrants against their will.

By denying immigrants asylum and forcing immigrants

to stay in their home countries or Mexico, tens of thousands will suffer an early death. Whether this takes place at the hands of US-funded death squads in Central America, hunger and gangs in Mexico, or overcrowded and unsanitary detention centers in the US, Trump and AMLO will be responsible.

The escalation of attacks on Central American immigrants is a prelude to similar attacks in the US. Trump is reportedly considering declaring another national emergency to impose the tariffs against Mexico, according to a draft declaration obtained by *The Hill*. Added to the February national emergency declaration used to deploy US troops to the border, this represents a major step on the road to a presidential dictatorship and of a government ruled by emergency decree.

The demand that Mexico accept "Safe Third Country" status also has immense international implications. The precedent is being set for other far-right regimes to abandon their responsibility to accept refugees, agreed to under the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees after the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust.

No faction of the American or Mexican ruling class offers a principled opposition to the assault on immigrants and democratic rights. AMLO's response to the tariff threat has been to whip up Mexican nationalism at the expense of Central American immigrants. The Mexican president has called for an "act of unity" in the border city of Tijuana, Baja California, today. This "national unity" will be achieved at the expense of Central American workers and peasants.

Across the Americas, the fight against Trump must take the shape of the struggle for socialism. The answer to economic nationalism and backwardness is internationalism, open borders, and ridding humanity of the source of trade war, the attack on immigrants, and every other social ill—the capitalist system. The slogan of the working masses must not be for nationalist "unity" with their own ruling classes, but for the class unity of the working class through the fight to establish the United Socialist States of the Americas.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>